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Senate

The Senate met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BEN RAY LUJÁN, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, we find rest in the shadow of Your protection. Shield our law-makers in their work with Your love so that they may grow in wisdom.

Lord, show them how to use today's fleeting minutes for Your glory, becoming Your instruments to permit Your Kingdom to thrive on Earth. Sanctify their thoughts as they remember that, because of You, they live and move and have their being.

We praise You this day, O God, for You are the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 28, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BEN RAY LUJÁN, a Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. LUJÁN thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

CAPITOL SECURITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, our colleagues Chairman LEAHY and Ranking Member SHELBY announced a bipartisan agreement on emergency funding for several pressing security matters.

The Appropriations Committee set out to address three key priorities:

First, reimbursing the costs incurred by the Capitol Police, the National Guard, and other law enforcement for their assistance during and after the January 6 attack on the Capitol; and providing for necessary repairs and security updates to the Capitol Complex.

Second, addressing a shortfall from the efforts to keep Congress a safe and functional workplace during the pandemic this past year and a half. This is everything from PPE to overtime pay for staff.

And, third, some urgent support for our Afghan partners who have assisted in the fight against terrorism and now seek to flee the deteriorating situation brought about by the administration's literally disastrous decision to abandon that country.

We owe a real debt to the men and women of the Capitol Police, DC Metro Police, National Guard, and other agencies who helped secure and protect our workplace. We are grateful to support staff, from the Architect of the

Capitol's team to the Attending Physician's office, to the Sergeant at Arms, who have worked day and night keeping us functioning safely throughout the pandemic.

And we intend to keep our Nation's promises to brave Afghans who have taken great risks to help Americans and our partners fight the terrorists.

So I applaud the bipartisan work of our colleagues. I am sure neither side finds the compromise perfect, but I believe that both sides should and will agree it is absolutely necessary.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now on a different matter, the massive, massive taxing-and-spending spree that Democrats want to ram through this summer has problems that go even beyond inflation, rising costs, and massive tax hikes.

The problem is not just Democrats' jaw-dropping \$3.5 trillion pricetag. It is also the long list of bad liberal policies that this reckless taxing-and-spending spree is supposed to purchase.

I spoke yesterday about just a few of those bad ideas. They are talking about amnesty for illegal immigrants, socialist price-fixing that would leave us with fewer new prescription drugs, fewer new treatments, and fewer new cures.

They want to permanently change the child tax credit into welfare with no—no—work requirements; smuggle in big chunks of the Green New Deal.

And in case all of this were not enough, some Senate Democrats want to use this taxing-and-spending spree to grab control over all 50 States' election laws. I thought we just had that debate a couple of weeks ago.

Remember, for several years now, our Democratic friends have claimed that every successive election proved they needed to grab partisan control over our democracy. In 2016, 2018, and 2020, win or lose—win or lose—when foreign

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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interference occurred and when it did not occur, every possible result has been claimed as proof that Washington Democrats should rip up our democracy's rule book and write a new one that benefits them.

The latest phony justification has been the false notion that a few States' mainstream voting laws equal some kind of assault on democracy as we know it. Of course, that is absolutely utter nonsense. Americans want it to be easy to vote and hard to cheat. Voter ID protections are hugely popular. Basic voter roll maintenance is common sense.

The new law in Georgia, for example, provides for more flexible early voting and absentee voting than many blue States, including New York. But the facts weren't about to stop the Democrats' big lie. The absurd comparison to Jim Crow segregation and all kinds of other horrors have continued apace.

To provide a little more context about this fake hysteria, we can also look internationally. As one columnist recently observed in the Washington Post, the balance struck by the State of Georgia amounts to "one of the most expansive voting access laws in the world. Most other countries do not allow no-excuse absentee voting, and dropboxes are also virtually unknown elsewhere," other democracies around the world. "If Georgia's elections are undemocratic, then almost all of our democratic allies are also undemocratic."

If liberal activists and woke corporations believed their own rhetoric, they wouldn't stop at boycotting and threatening the State of Georgia. They couldn't possibly. They would be busy trying to divest from most of our NATO allies and essentially the rest of the entire developed world.

Some European countries allow mail-in voting, but most do not. We constantly hear from our socialist friends how we should be emulating Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark. Well, none of them allow in-country postal voting—not a one. Bring on the boycotts, I guess.

And you don't even want to hear about early voting. Goodness gracious. But France, Spain, Germany, Italy, the UK, Ireland—not a day of in-person early voting in any of those countries, none of them. That is according to an international NGO that studies democracy.

So, remember, the Texas and Georgia laws codify a whole lot of early voting, mail-in voting, and lots of election-day voting.

And this is supposed to be the death of democracy? Some outrage on a global and historic scale?

Give me a break. What nonsense.

Even going by Texas's new proposals, there will be voting by mail in Paris, TX, but not in Paris, France. There would be almost 2 weeks of in-person early voting in New Berlin, TX, but zero days in Berlin, Germany. I am sure Democrats will be yelling at the

Fortune 500 to boycott Europe any day now—any day now.

Of course, the reality is that these moving goalposts are absolutely fake. The frantic outrage is phony. It is all meant to justify a political power grab that Democrats have had written and waiting since years before any of these new State laws, which are supposedly prompting it—yet another awful plank that my colleagues across the aisle want to hide in the reckless taxing-and-spending spree they hope to ram through Congress.

TERRORISM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on one final matter, last week, some of our colleagues expressed disapproval of U.S. strikes against al-Shabaab terrorists in Somalia. I find their views difficult to understand.

Al-Shabaab poses a significant threat to U.S. interests. But you don't have to take my word for it. Late in 2019, the leader of al-Shabaab, an al-Qaida-affiliated terrorist group based in Somalia, said:

Our biggest target today is the Americans . . . The only reason we have exerted all this effort and undertaken all this preparation today is to attack the American troops.

In the assessment of the commander of U.S. Africa Command, U.S. General Stephen Townsend, that is coming from "the largest, wealthiest, and most violent Al Qaeda-associated group in the world" and "the primary African violent extremist organization threat to American interests."

This is not a new threat. Al-Shabaab was designated a foreign terrorist organization back in 2008. Its leaders declared allegiance to al-Qaida in 2012, a year before their attack on the Westgate Mall in Kenya that killed 67 people. The Obama administration designated the group as an al-Qaida-associated force in 2016. That made it subject to the 2001 AUMF.

At the time, it was a difficult but telling acknowledgement that the al-Qaida terrorist threat was growing. The raid that killed Bin Laden had clearly not ended the threat his terrorists posed to our country.

As a result of its declared and demonstrated allegiance to al-Qaida, al-Shabaab is clearly subject to the 2001 authorization for the use of military force, no question. President Obama knew it. General Townsend knows it. Al-Shabaab themselves tell us they want Americans dead. What more, what more do the skeptics need?

If our colleagues do not want the U.S. military to conduct strikes against the al-Qaida terrorists responsible for killing Americans and threatening our interests, I would be interested to hear how they propose we defend against these threats.

So, by the way, with the administration's rushed withdrawal from Afghanistan, there are well-founded concerns that al-Qaida may be roaring back in that country.

So which al-Qaida affiliate should we stop pressuring—al-Shabaab, AQAP, ISIS? Should we stop hunting for al-Zawahiri, the leader of al-Qaida?

Administrations of both parties have identified and supported local partners who share an interest in combating terrorists. By and large, this approach has succeeded in keeping pressure on the terrorists while keeping more Americans out of harm's way.

But despite the best efforts of local partners to keep the terrorists at bay and the best efforts of U.S. diplomats to broker peace, some terrorists do require direct action by the U.S. military to be stopped. These hard-core extremists pose a serious threat to American national security. They seek to attack our interests all around the world, including our homeland, if we let them.

The threat they pose will not recede if we lose focus. In fact, the exact opposite is the case. So I hope the Commander in Chief will exercise the authorities the Congress has provided him and the tools Congress has funded to keep America safe against the terrorists who continue to target our homeland and our interests abroad.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, with respect to infrastructure, Senators continue to make good progress on both tracks of legislation. Members should be prepared to vote again on cloture on the motion to proceed to the bipartisan infrastructure bill as early as tonight.

CAPITOL SECURITY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on another matter, yesterday, the Senate Appropriations Chairman, Senator LEAHY, announced a bipartisan agreement to provide \$2.1 billion in emergency supplemental funding to support the Capitol Police, reimburse our National Guard, and make sure all the critical functions of the Capitol Complex are properly funded.

The toll of January 6 and the impact of COVID had meant that funding for the Capitol Police, the Capitol Complex, and even for our National Guard was running low.